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**CARRIER, BLACKMAN & ASSOCIATES, P.C.**24101 NOVI ROAD  
SUITE 100  
NOVI, MICHIGAN 48375Tel. (248) 344-4422  
Fax (248) 344-1096  
E-mail: [chlaw@ameritech.net](mailto:chlaw@ameritech.net)  
[www.carrier-blackman.com](http://www.carrier-blackman.com)JOSEPH P. CARRIER\*  
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DATE: March 6, 2003 OUR REF: SIP-106-A YOUR REF: USSN 09/619,547

TO (COMPANY): US Patent &amp; Trademark Office, Group Art Unit 2834

ATTN: Examiner David W. Scheuermann

FROM: Joseph P. Carrier

FAX NO. CALLED: (703) 308-7724 NO. OF PAGES (Including this page) 2

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MESSAGE: The attached page is a signed copy of the signature page of the AMENDMENT- B which was submitted minutes ago. The signature page of the AMENDMENT- B as originally submitted was inadvertently not signed.

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Other Matters

The additional references cited by the Examiner (Maekawa and Kawano et al.) have been considered by applicant, but it is respectfully submitted that these additional references fail to overcome the deficiencies of Figs 15-16 and the Marchegiani and Umeda references relative to the claimed invention, as discussed above.

New claims 21-24 are believed to be allowable based on the foregoing arguments concerning the merits of claims 1 and 18, as well as on the merits of the limitations presented in the new claims.

Conclusion

In conclusion, applicant has overcome the Examiner's objection and rejections as presented in the Office Action; and moreover, applicant has considered all of the references of record, and it is respectfully submitted that the invention as defined by each of the present claims is clearly patentably distinct thereover.

The application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, and a notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

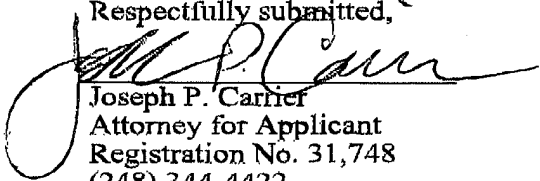
Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner is not fully convinced of all of the claims now in the application, applicant respectfully requests that she telephonically contact applicant's undersigned representative to expeditiously resolve prosecution of the application.

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Customer No. 21828  
Carrier, Blackman & Associates, P.C.  
24101 Novi Road, Suite 100  
Novi, Michigan 48375  
March 6, 2003

Respectfully submitted,

  
Joseph P. Carrier  
Attorney for Applicant  
Registration No. 31,748  
(248) 344-4422

MAR 6 2003

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